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TAPOL REPORT

Memo on human rights violations in Dili

A series of human rights abuses have occurred in Dili since the beginning of November. The targets include pupils at several Catholic schools, along with Bishop Belo who, following the crackdown against young East Timorese who demonstrated at the Pope's mass, allowed a number of them to take refuge in his home.

4 November

While a number of youngsters were still taking refuge in the Bishop's home, a crowd of people organised an attack on his home, hoping to force him to hand them over. The attack was apparently organised by members of Apodeti. According to one account, the 4 November attack met with resistance from a pro-Belo crowd of about fifty people. The army broke up the pro-Belo demonstration and three people were arrested. On the next day, Sunday, according to another account, a crowd of people gathered outside the Bishop's house to protect the Bishop.

It appears that some time after this attack, the people who were taking refuge in Belo's house left. Belo believes that they went home but that some were later summoned by the security forces for questioning. It is not clear how many are still under detention.

13 November

Two East Timorese youths were arrested at Ribera Lahane, near the high school. One was shot dead by the military as he was trying to escape; the other was stabbed as he was being arrested. No names are available.

15 November

Police raided the Sao Jose secondary school in Balide looking for young people who were suspected of having been involved in the pro-Belo demonstration on 4 November. Shots were fired into the air and at least two boys were arrested, one of whom was badly injured. According to one report, the school-caretaker was injured. There were clashes between school-pupils and the security forces, and according to one source, the Bishop intervened.

It appears that after this incident, more than two dozen young people again fled and took refuge in the Bishop's home.

Early December

The military raided the Bishop's house and removed 28 people who were taking refuge there. Their whereabouts are not known.

[Sources: The BBC World Service, the British Foreign Office, a letter from inside and a brief report in *Kompas.]*

Comments

The information received relates only to developments in Dili. People in Dili

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now live in an atmosphere of tension and fear. Bishop Belo who has for some time been willing to discuss the situation over the phone with callers from overseas, has recently asked that no-one phone him for the time being.

The crackdown is evidence of a growing militancy and opposition among young Timorese. One observer has been quoted by the BBC World Service as saying: "The Indonesian authorities should learn from the recent events. This is not the older generation who fought them in 1975 but the Indonesian educated youngsters who are turning against them."

Some western embassies, including several from EC countries, are known to be monitoring the abuses in Dili. In a statement on behalf of the 12 EC governments at the UN General Assembly Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs on 20 November in New York, the French delegate said:

The Twelve remain pre-occupied by information about human rights violations in East Timor. They have taken note that the territory has been opened up to a degree to the outside world since January 1989, in line with the concerns they expressed in face of the absence of significant progress in the territory. They hope that the opening up also means that non-governmental organisations, including human rights organisations, may soon be permitted to visit the territory. They again repeat the hope that there will be an end to the reported abuses.

This indication of concern from West European governments gives us a good opportunity to take immediate initiatives, calling for much greater pressure on the Indonesian authorities about abuses in East Timor.

Action

1. Please write to your government calling on it to seek information about the events in Dili, and to protest against the attacks on Bishop Belo and on young people taking refuge with him and to those who have come to his defence. Urge your government to seek assurances from the Indonesian authorities about the Bishop's safety. It is quite intolerable for East Timorese to be so fearful for their personal safety that Bishop Belo's home has now become a regular haven of refuge for a large number of Timorese.

2. Inform members of parliament and ask them to make similar requests to the government.

3. Please inform Catholic organisations in your country about these developments and ask them to take action in defence of Bishop Belo. Do what you can to have this information published by the Catholic and other Christian press.

4. Write to the Pope calling on him to exert pressure on the Indonesian authorities to protect the Bishop and other church workers in East Timor.

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